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## House of Representatives

### Bishop John M. Smith's Golden Jubilee 50 Years of Priesthood and Extraordinary Service

**HON. CHRIS SMITH OF NEW JERSEY**  
*(Excerpts of Remarks)*

Mr. Speaker: Words are inadequate to convey my profound respect, admiration and gratitude for Trenton Diocese Bishop Emeritus John Mortimer Smith, who celebrated his golden jubilee—an amazing 50 years as a Catholic priest—on May 22nd at a Mass attended by over 800 people at St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral in Trenton, New Jersey.

The Mass—concelebrated by several bishops including Bishop David M. O'Connell, now Bishop of Trenton, and several priests including Bishop Smith's brother, Fr. Andrew Smith—was filled with joy and reflection, befitting acknowledgement of a great servant of God.

In his moving homily, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick noted that Bishop Smith is an “extraordinary brother and an extraordinary friend”... “a man filled with faith, filled with zeal—zeal for the Church, zeal for the people he serves, and, in a special way as a Bishop, zeal for his priests.” The Cardinal said we are called to “model Jesus Christ to our people...” and

“imitate Christ...Mort Smith,” he continued, “has lived it well.”

Cardinal McCarrick brought smiles and laughter throughout the Cathedral when he said, “I’m not here to canonize Bishop Smith although that may come,” and then went on to call Bishop Smith the “world’s greatest kibitzer” due to his legendary penchant for telling stories—usually very long, usually and happily, very funny.

Once when I was about to give an address at the St. Thomas More dinner in Trenton, I turned to Bishop Smith seated with my wife and me at a table desperate for a joke. He gave me two. And I, courtesy of his jokes, had them rolling in the aisle.

Bishop Smith’s uncanny ability to infuse humor and hope-filled lightheartedness into almost all things is not only entertaining but makes presentation of the Gospel to an often confused and stressed out world more efficacious.

Bishop Smith connects amazingly well with the youth. I’ve witnessed it many times at schools and at the Catholic Men’s Rally. Bishop

Smith has an uncanny way of challenging everyone—especially our young people—to faithfully and courageously live the Gospel.

And you know it never fails. Within a minute or two of being with Bishop Smith you always find yourself smiling and your spirits lifted.

For the many years that I have known him, Bishop Smith not only radiates the love of Christ, but he works hard and smart.

Often, I don't know where he finds the time. Ordained a priest on May 27, 1961, he has really done it all.

Bishop Smith has earned several degrees and got his doctorate from Catholic University of America in the sixties and was deployed as a pastor in the Newark Archdiocese.

Over the years, he has chaired or been the director of numerous boards, including the Institute for Continuing Theological Education, the U.S. Bishops Consultation IV, and the Archdiocesan Vocation Board.

He has also served in leadership positions on the Bishops' Committee on Migration and Refugee Services and served on the Board of Directors of the Saint Vincent de Paul Seminary, Notre Dame Seminary, Saint Joseph College Seminary, Saint Francis Medical Center in Trenton, the Pontifical North American College (Rome), and Catholic Relief Services, and I note parenthetically he made five humanitarian trips to Africa as part of Catholic Relief Services' mission there.

As Bishop his pastoral plan—Led by the Spirit—identified seven pastoral priorities including dealing with charity and justice, pastoral leadership, ethnic diversity, youth and young adult ministry, faith formation and

Sunday worship. Today, all one hundred and eleven parishes in the Trenton Diocese are developing "action plans" to implement Led by the Spirit.

Bishop Smith created the Institute for Lay Ecclesial Ministry, which has formed and commissioned approximately a hundred people to date.

He also updated and expanded the strategic use of media to advance the Gospel and the culture of life, and created RealFaith TV—an award winning teen talk show. And he has boosted the Trenton Diocese's online outreach to the Hispanic community, to protect the sanctity of human life, and to reach an even wider audience with news and commentary published in the excellent diocesan newspaper, The Monitor.

Faced with declining enrollment in the diocesan schools largely due to escalating costs, which include 36 elementary schools and eight high schools, Bishop Smith's "Commitment to Excellence" initiative established benchmarks to make an already effective education program even better.

Mr. Speaker, my wife Marie and I were among those offering prayers of thanks at Bishop Smith's jubilee mass.

We rejoiced with his family and friends for his accomplishments that are without number. We rejoiced over his bold, consistent, and compassionate commitment to defending unborn children, their mothers, and the sanctity of life. We rejoiced—and were inspired anew—by his life well lived.

And Mr. Speaker, we gave thanks that while his extraordinary ministry has changed in "retirement," he is far from done.